

Parenting NEWS & VIEWS

EARLY LEARNING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Emotional Literacy and Self-Regulation

Consider what you, as a parent, look for when you are selecting a child care program. Imagine you are touring a child care program during their morning routine, and this is what you see:

David and three-year-old Lily walk in the door, stop at a child-sized table where there is a mirror, a large flower pot with sand in it, and a row of sticks that have paper flowers and leaves attached to one end. In the center of the flowers is a picture of each child in the program, and their name is printed on the leaves below their picture. Lily says, "There's mine!" and carefully places the flower in the flower pot.

Then Lily looks at the mirror. Next to the mirror is a laminated poster that shows different emotions.

Turning to David, Lily asks, "Guess how I feel today, Papa?" David responds by pointing to the mirror and saying, "When you look in the mirror there is a smile on your face, so I think you feel happy." Lily laughs and says, "That's right!" and picks up the whiteboard marker to make a mark next to the image that looks happy. Lily and David hug, tell each other to have a good day, and Lily is off to play.

Marina walks in the room clutching onto a blanket, walks past the check-in table, and stomps to the quiet corner. In the quiet corner there is a child-sized table with cozy chairs and activities to practice identifying and managing emotions. There are puppets with different emotion faces for telling stories, handprints on the wall so that children can push as hard as they can

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FAMILY CONNECTIONS

The following books are filled with ideas and activities to support families in building positive relationships, connecting, and spending time together. Look for the following titles in your local public library:

- *Family Fun Nights: 140 Activities The Whole Family Will Enjoy* by Lisa Bany-Winters (2006)
- *Fun On The Run!: 324 Instant Family Activities* by Cynthia L. Copeland (2004)
- *How To Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish (1999)
- *Raising Your Spirited Child (Revised): A Guide For Parents Whose Child Is More Intense, Sensitive, Perceptive, Persistent and Energetic* by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka (2006)
- *Unplugged Play: No Batteries, No Plugs, Pure Fun* by Bobbi Connor (2007)

Encouraging Words

Parents have a powerful influence on their child's self-esteem and success in learning. Children who feel confident and capable are more likely to embrace challenges and continue trying, even when they encounter obstacles. Talking children through problems, but allowing them to be the ones to solve them, teaches them to develop persistence and resilience. The following ideas offer encouragement to children and build their self-esteem, character, and resilience.

- **Great Day Notes:** After your child is asleep, write a note that lets them know how special they are and place it where they will see it first thing in the morning. Starting the day with a compliment will help your child feel special and loved. Examples: "I'm so proud of who you are!" "Yesterday, you were so helpful when we were cleaning up!" "I love you!"



- **Me Tree:** You will need paper and crayons or markers. Invite your child to draw a tree trunk with branches on a piece of paper. Then, they can draw leaves on the branches. On each leaf, they can write down something they like about themselves. You can help by writing down positive words that you believe describe them, too. Let them finish coloring the Me Tree, and then hang it up where your child can see it every day.
- **Catching Compliments:** You will need your family and a soft ball. Stand in a circle and toss the ball to each other. Each time the ball is thrown, the person who throws it gives a compliment to the person catching it. Continue playing until everyone has received several compliments. Make the compliments specific. For example, "You are so organized! Every night, you get your school supplies and homework ready for the next day."
- **Feel Good Notebook:** Invite your child to decorate a notebook. Use that notebook to write down all the good things that happen to your child. They can share accomplishments with you, or just talk about a great day. Once they learn how to write, encourage them to keep up the journal. Remember to focus on the positive!

RECIPES Cheesy Zucchini

A half-cup serving of zucchini is a good source of vitamin A, vitamin C, manganese, potassium, and vitamin B6. Invite your child to help prepare this tasty side dish for dinner.

Ingredients

- 3 medium zucchini
- 3/4 cup of margarine or butter
- 2 finely chopped garlic gloves (or a pinch of garlic powder)
- 1 cup of grated parmesan cheese

Instructions

Wash and slice each zucchini into four long slices or spears. Place them on a plate and cover them with plastic wrap. Microwave for 1 minute, or until the zucchini is tender. Coat a shallow baking pan with cooking oil spray. Combine the margarine and chopped garlic in a small mixing bowl. Pour the mixture over the zucchini and sprinkle on enough parmesan cheese to cover the zucchini. Broil in the oven until the cheese is bubbly. Remove from the oven and let it cool. Enjoy!

You will also need

- Small mixing bowl
- Cheese grater
- Shallow baking pan
- Cooking oil spray
- Microwave safe plate
- Plastic wrap





Bonding with Your Baby

From the moment infants are born, they seek to attach and bond with their parents. Part of an infant's survival instincts includes the ability to recognize the sound, sight, and smell of its mother at birth. When a mother holds a baby to comfort or feed it, the attachment process begins. Over time, as they begin to recognize and understand each other's body language, emotions, and tone of voice, that initial bond formed at birth grows stronger.

An infant goes through the same attachment process with its father, family members, and caregivers. This process of feeling connected to a person or group allows the infant to develop the sense of trust and safety they need to explore their environment with confidence and remain resilient when they encounter changes. An infant who has developed strong relationships will be more prepared to learn and develop physical strength, thinking skills, and social competence.

Parents can strengthen bonds with young children by developing a responsive routine that builds positive experiences. The first step is to become familiar with an infant's non-verbal cues. An infant will use their face and body to communicate. For example, an infant will often smile, kick their feet, and move their arms when a familiar person is near to demonstrate pleasure and anticipation that they will be picked up and spoken to. An infant who is not ready to be moved, or is upset, may arch their back to indicate they do not want to be held. Over time, you and your baby will learn to read each other's expressions and recognize each other's cues. This will help make understanding each other easier.

The second step to bonding with your infant is to take things slowly. Allow your infant to set the pace of an activity as often as possible. For example, take your time feeding your infant. Hold them in your arms and sing softly. Allowing routines to be unhurried shows the infant that they have your attention. Using a soothing voice, singing rhythmic songs, or dancing slowly with them in your arms gives the infant the opportunity to feel comfortable with the sound of your voice and the feel of your body. As you and your infant grow closer, you will learn to love and appreciate each other's personalities, creating a foundation of safe and loving support for you as a family.

Source: "What Infant Attachment Means for You" by John Surr (Exchange Magazine, March/April 2012).



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when they feel angry, pinwheels with silk flowers attached to them so that children can practice deep breathing, stuffed animals for cuddling, books about feelings, and tools for taking turns (visual timers for how many minutes a turn will have and dice to roll to decide who goes next).

Marina picks up a flower pinwheel and sits down. After a couple of minutes, Marina lifts up the pinwheel to “smell” the flower and blow the petals so the pinwheel spins. After a few minutes of deep breathing, Marina gets up and puts the blanket away before walking to the table and choosing a puzzle. The teacher asks Marina, “How are you feeling this morning?” Marina says, “I was mad because I wasn’t done sleeping and we had to leave, but I feel better now.”

This early educator has created a space where children can practice understanding and regulating their emotions. You notice the art and dramatic play areas have a wide variety of materials to promote self-expression and explore social situations, and there are also a lot of books about families and friends. The adults model how to treat others and support children in resolving conflicts with minimal support so that they can learn to manage their emotions and build positive relationships.



Providing children with opportunities to learn about feelings, collaborate, negotiate, and work together builds the language and literacy skills they need to learn how to regulate themselves and communicate their needs, thoughts, and ideas clearly. When you are looking for child care, you should see an environment similar to the one in this story, where children are encouraged to practice language and social skills. Talk with the caregiver(s) about how they would promote your child’s development in their program, and discover if they have recommendations for what you can do at home. Your child will benefit from you selecting a program where you can work together as a team.

Source: California Preschool Curriculum Framework, Volume I by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2010).

ABOUT CHS

For over 130 years, Children’s Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community’s children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family’s health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for child care providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org.

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